

EDITORIAL

with Traci Gardner

Have we lost the magic?

I am a huge fan of technology and the purposes it serves in our world. However, if there is one time of year when all use of mobile phones and laptops should be banished it's to me, undoubtedly Christmas.

When reading a headline this week in a national newspaper, it became glaringly obvious that the 21st century has forced its way into the holiday season and is changing the magic of Christmas, when it stated "1 in 3 Children will write their lists to Santa through a website or Smartphone App." Or that "one-quarter of adults will send their Christmas greetings through social networking site, Facebook". It becomes hard to see where the magic of Christmas is for children when their beliefs now lie behind the screen of a computer...or even worse their mobile phones.

What's troubling is coming across apps that give its user the chance to scan the barcode of a particular item they have been looking at which will then send an email to the parents letting them know exactly what it is the child is looking for. It is almost creating a demand and taking away any sense of what Christmas stands for, and replacing it with nothing more than an event of receiving presents.

How are children supposed to believe in the magic of Christmas and trust in a Santa Claus if the most common way of contact is through an email account?

Some phone carriers are offering the opportunity to text Santa. All they have to do is text "Santa's number" and send him their wish list, and wait for his reply. Is texting the modern equivalent of writing a letter and mailing it to Santa Claus?

Surely this cannot become the new Christmas tradition. Instead of children sitting in their homes, perhaps by a fire, writing a letter to Santa, they will take out their cell phones and...send a text?

And, what happened to the art of sending out signed Christmas cards? You know, those weeks spent planning, making lists of people who you needed to send cards too, writing little personalized greetings inside each and every card, and heading to the post office to stamp and mail that rather large pile of cards. Instead, most people will log into Facebook and leave a rather un-personalized Christmas greeting on friends' pages.

Electronic communication is efficient, convenient and cheap. But, it is not thoughtful. It tells friends and loved ones that sending them a Christmas card takes up time you could spend more productively. By contrast, the minute or so it takes to sign and address a card is time spent thinking of someone else.



TOYS ON TOYS: Dave Lindsay, April Mitchell, and Wally Ella of Leathertown Lumber were preparing to donate this large pile of toys to the Salvation Army that were generously donated to their Toys For Tots Campaign which ran until December 15. These toys will be distributed to local families in need this Christmas season. - Marie Shadbolt photo

The real deal

I think I was about three years old or maybe four. We were in Milton at the Ford dealer on Christmas Eve. My parents had bought a brand new navy blue Mercury and we were driving it home. I remember being in the back seat looking out the rear window into the crystal clear ice cold night with stars lighting our way home. All the way I was looking for Santa and his sleigh. I knew he was there, I just had to look hard enough and I was sure I would see him. That is what I love about Christmas...the magic that the child in all of us can feel.

Over the years, I've learned that Santa really can't be in all the places we need him to be like shopping malls and parties, with all the work that is going on at the North Pole. In those situations he of course, calls in the recruits or Santa helpers to assist. Therefore with several decades of seeing Santa's helpers at such places, I've become quite a rather, shall we say picky, about his assistants. Just because you can say HO HO HO and don a red suit is not



By **Angela Tyler**

enough to qualify you as Santa assistant. It takes a really special man to fully encompass his inner Kris Kringle and the magic of Christmas.

A few weeks back we went to a local mall for the traditional picture of the kiddos with one of the assistants. Since becoming a mom, we've done photos with four different photos. It soon began to feel like Goldielocks and the Three Bears.

The helper Santa was just too young, too skinny and he just wasn't right at all. The next two years we went to the same mall. It was the traditional North Pole backdrop that the mall had probably used for the last 20 years. This time the assistant was about 20 years older but he didn't smile or talk to the kids. Is it not part of the Santa Code to actually say Merry Christmas to the kids? He was relieved of duty with us after the second

year. The next year we tried the "Santa Experience". This helper Santa was pretty good compared to the first skinny one stuffed with a really cheap pillow however, the experience wasn't much of one at all after he did the hokey pokey with the kids.

This year, we headed off to another mall I had heard good things about. Then when I saw him I was in awe. He was no Santa helper. The man in red had taken a break from the North Pole and was right before our very eyes. He was perfect. 'He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his feet...His eyes how they twinkled, his dimples so merry, his cheeks were like rose, his nose like a cherry. The beard on his chin was as white as the snow' (and the real deal). There Santa was chatting with me and the kids. As he smiled and listened to the kiddos, I felt my heart fill with warmth and perhaps a tear at my eye as I knew that this moment for them would be remembered like when I looked up into that cold clear night more than 40 years ago.



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